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Botz, Gerhard

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

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Gerhard Botz *

Abstract: *»Politische Gewalt – Formen und Strategien in der Ersten Republik Österreichs«.* In this article, the author uses political violence, that is, the politically motivated physical damage human beings inflict on each other in any number of ways, as a lens to examine forms and patterns of extreme social conflict that emerged in the First Austrian Republic. In his analyses, the author uses quantitative and qualitative analyses of violence by different political groups to determine the impact of social and economic factors, among others, on this violence. After an introduction this contribution deals with the quantitative changes in political violence between 1918 and 1934 and the qualitative changes in the structure of political conflict. After that the forms and patterns of political violence that emerged in this connection are described and some explicit strategies of violence by individual political groupings are given. Finally, the social causes of political violence are examined and provide new explanation of the breakdown of Austrian democracy and the twofold civil war (in February and July) 1934. These events are not only a result of anti-democratic political decision making but also of the consequence of the rising waves of social conflicts and self-enforcing violence.

Keywords: Political violence, Revolution, National Socialism, First Republic, Austria.

1. Introduction

This contribution deals with the concept of 'political violence' in so far as it concerns actions whereby human beings inflict (forcible) physical damage – injuries or death – on each other.[1] Political violence, in this context, is understood as one of the forms political and social conflicts may take in a given society. In a wide range of not-yet-violent methods for the articulation of interests and the settlement of conflicts, which vary according to conflict systems, violence represents the most extreme means.[2] It appears not merely in one area of conflict – such as politics and

* Reprint of: Gerhard Botz. 1982. Political Violence, its Forms and Strategies in the First Austrian Republic. In *Social Protest, Violence and Terror in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Gerhard Hirschfeld, 300-29. London.

1 Cf. K.-D. Knodel, 1962, *Der Begriff der Gewalt im Strafrecht,* Munich, 3; W. Fuchs, et al., eds., 1973, *Lexikon zur Soziologie,* Opladen, 247.

2 Cf. for instance L. A. Coser, 1972, *Theorie sozialer Konflikte,* Neuwied, 142 et seq., 178 et seq.; A. L. Nieburg, 1969, *Political Violence: The Behavioral Process,* New York, 13; H. Davis Graham

government – but is systematically linked to many conflict systems, within families, the workplace and the economy. It is, however, a characteristic of violence that at certain levels, or when the 'normal' sequence of escalation is blocked, it can, through external influence, shift from one conflict system to another; this accounts for its multidimensional nature that makes it so difficult to pin down.[3] Its study therefore also requires at least some examination of non-violent levels in the conduct of conflicts within a conflict system.

Seen from this angle, it is clear that violence must always be examined in conjunction with its (less active) counterpart in a given conflict. Thus political violence is not to be defined exclusively from the point of view of the modern state's monopoly of violence. It includes not only the illegal actions by persons and groups[4] in opposition to state and society, but also its use by the organs of the state.

However desirable it might therefore appear to link the following deliberations on the subject – violence in the context of 'striving for a share in the power or for an influence on the distribution of power [...] within a state'[5] – with the wider history of conflicts within Austrian society during the inter-war years, limitations of space and not least the present state of research into conflict,[6] do not permit this. In the following I shall therefore attempt to steer a pragmatic course between too narrow and too comprehensive an approach.

2. The Quantitative Changes in Political Violence between 1918 and 1934 and the Qualitative Changes in the Structure of Political Conflict

No more practicable indicator of the actual extent of violence exists than the number of victims it claims. Their number also represents that yardstick of violence which enables us to compare and thus to quantify different forms of political violence – at least with regard to its extent, although not in relation to the public's perception of violence, nor the degree of its deliberateness and thus moral reprehensibility. In the following I shall merely examine the annual numbers of dead and

and T. R. Gurr, eds., 1969, *The History of Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives,* New York; E. Zimmermann, 1977, *Soziologie der politischen Gewalt,* Stuttgart.

3 More extensively treated in my contribution *Formen und Intensität politisch-sozialer Konflikte in der Ersten und Zweiten Republik* to the symposium Deux fois l'Autriche: Apres 1918 et apres 1945, Rouen, November 8-12, 1977; Austriaca, 1979, *Cahiers universitaires d'information sur l'Autriche* 3: 428 et seq., as well as in my (unpublished) scenario *Bedingungen 'sozialen Friedens' und politischer Gewalt in Perioden wirtschaftlicher Krisen in Österreich* (Institut für Konfliktforschung, Vienna, 1978) (a more comprehensive publication on this subject is being prepared for the Studienreihe Konfliktforschung, Vienna).

4 T. Nardin, 1971, *Violence and the State: A Critique of Empirical Political Theory,* Beverly Hills and London, 66.

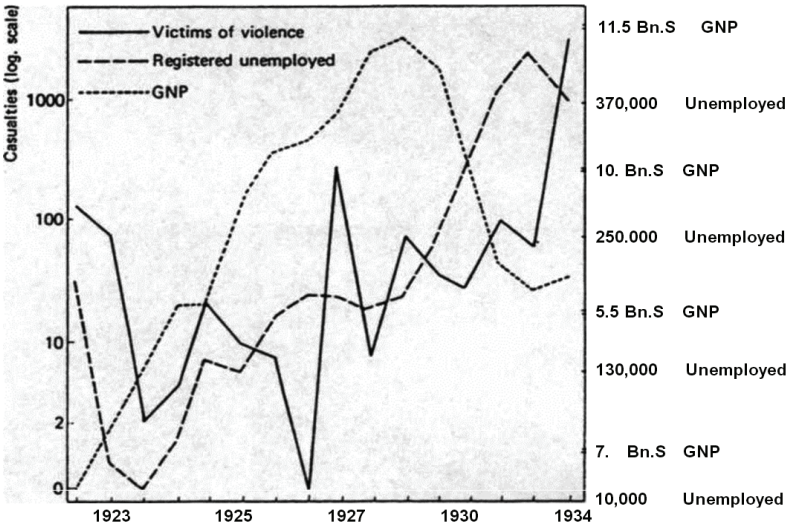
5 M. Weber, 1964, in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft,* ed. J. Winckelmann, 1042 et seq., Cologne.

6 The most comprehensive and most recent publication on Austria: B. Marin, ed., 1979, *Wachstumskrisen in Österreich?, vol. II: Szenarios,* Vienna; cf. more generally also: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 3 (1977), especially the contributions by Ch. Tilly and H. Volkmann.

seriously injured, which throughout the years under review remained at a fairly constant ratio of 1:3.[7] A separate analysis of the different categories of physical injury would produce practically the same results.

The line traced in Figure 1, by taking the number of victims (logarithmically transformed), shows the course of violence in Austria from 1919 to 1934.[8]

Figure 1: The Course of Political Violence, Unemployment and Gross National Product (GNP) in the First Austrian Republic



This shows that the years 1919 and 1920 (including the last quarter of 1918), with a total number of casualties ranging from 76 to 124, compared to the six years thereafter, stand out clearly as the period of 'Austrian revolution.'[9] This semi-revolutionary period saw the political and national reshaping of Austria, within a social and political structure broken up by the aftermath of the World War; at the same time however, in social and economic terms, the shift of political weight from the traditional power elites of the Habsburg monarchy to the industrial working class and the independent peasants as well as later to the industrial bourgeoisie, was

[7] See G. Botz, 1976, *Gewalt in der Politik: Attentate, Zusammenstöße, Putschversuche, Unruhen in Österreich 1918-1934,* Munich, 235 et seq.

[8] What argues for the use of the decadic logarithm in calculating annual casualty figures, increased by a factor of 1, are theoretical considerations (see also below, Section 5) and the demands imposed by the regression model (H. M. Blalock, Jr., 1972, *Social Statistics*, 2nd ed., Tokyo, 408 et seq.; K. Holm, ed., 1977, *Die Befragung* 5, Munich, 70 et seq., 124 et seq.

[9] O. Bauer, 1976, Die österreichische Revolution (1923) in *Werkausgabe*, vol. 2, ed. O. Bauer, 489-865, Vienna.

only a limited one.[10] After a brief period of dominance by the Social Democratic working class, the 'Austrian revolution' ended up in a kind of 'balance of class forces.'[11]

In the subsequent period of comparative internal stability, the political and social distribution of power that had been established in 1918/20 remained still relatively intact.[12] Only once during the period up to 1926 – in 1923 – did the annual number of casualties of violence exceed 20. Compared to other periods of the First Republic these years thus appear relatively non-violent, although compared to the Second Republic they were distinctly violent.

The 89 dead and at least 266 seriously injured during the workers' unrest of 15 July 1927 (the burning of the Palace of Justice),[13] which led to a police massacre, mark the end of a state of comparative internal stability and of a still broadly even distribution of weight between the forces of Left and Right, before the first symptoms of the world economic crisis had even begun to be observed in Austria.

Although in 1928 the stabilising forces within the political system once again appeared to gain the upper hand, the first signs of the world slump of 1929 set in train a process of progressive destabilisation and the appearance of fascist forces – first in the shape of *Heimwehren* (home defence units), and from 1932 onwards in the form of National Socialism and an increasing marginalisation of the Social Democratic workers' movement.[14] Despite considerable variations in the annual casualty figures (between 27 and 104), the years between 1929 and 1933 were characterised by a marked tendency towards increased political violence. In 1934, this period of latent civil war finally turned into temporary open civil war (the *Schutzbund* revolt of 12 February, with a total of 320 deaths, and the National Socialist putsch of 25 July, with a total of 269 deaths)[15] and led to the replacement of a parliamentary-democratic system of political rule and control by a semi-fascist authoritarian one.[16]

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[10] Ibid., 743 et seq.; F. L. Carsten, 1973, *Revolutionen in Mitteleuropa 1918/19,* Cologne, 23 et seq. A comprehensive bibliography on this and the First Republic as a whole most recently, U. Kluge, 1978, Das Dilemma der Demokratie, *Neue Politische Literatur* 23: 219-47; cf. generally also D. Lehnert, 1979, *Die Epoche der Revolution am Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges 1917-1920*, (schriftliches) Referat auf der internationalen Tagung der Historiker der Arbeiterbewegung, 15. Linzer Konferenz, Linz, September 11-15, 1979.

[11] O. Bauer, 1924, Das Gleichgewicht der Klassenkräfte, *Der Kampf* 17: 57-67.

[12] Cf. generally H. Hautmann and R. Kropf, 1978, *Die österreichische Arbeiterbewegung vom Vormärz bis 1945*, 3rd ed., Vienna, 125 et seq.

[13] See most recently: R. Neck and A. Wandruszka, eds., 1979, *Die Ereignisse des 15. Juli 1927,* Vienna.

[14] Cf. N. Leser, 1968, *Zwischen Reformismus und Bolschewismus,* Vienna, 449 et seq.; H. Mommsen, 1979, *Arbeiterbewegung und Nationale Frage,* Göttingen, 345 et seq.

[15] K. R. Stadler, 1974, *Opfer verlorener Zeiten,* Vienna, 44; G. Jagschitz, 1976, *Der Putsch: Die Nationalsozialisten in Österreich,* Graz, 167; cf. also L. Jedlicka and R. Neck, eds., 1975, *Das Jahr 1934: 12. Februar,* Vienna; (eds), L. Jedlicka and R. Neck, eds., 1975, *Das Jahr 1934: 25. Juli,* Vienna.

[16] See E. Holtmann, 1978, *Zwischen Unterdrückung und Befreiung: Sozialistische Arbeiterbewegung und autoritäres Regime in Österreich 1933-1938,* Vienna, 42 et seq.

A breakdown of the statistics on victims of violence according to political affiliation indicates the dominant lines of conflict within Austrian society along which political violence tended to occur.[17] Table 1 below shows the total numbers of victims for each year as well as the political groupings which were mainly involved in violent conflicts, according to their share in the overall annual casualty figures. The casualties suffered by the state's organs of coercion are distributed among the various political and social 'camps' according to political weighting.

Table 1: Annual Levels of Violence (Numbers of Victims) and Percentages According to Political Affiliation

	No. of Victims	Percentages According to Political Affiliations
1918 (from 12 Nov.)	9	(1) Marxists (78%); (2) Conservatives (22%)
1919	124	(1) Left-wing radicals (52%); (2) Catholic-conservatives (12%); (3) Social democrats (11%)
1920	76	(1) Social democrats (47%); (2) Communists (45%); (3) Catholic-conservatives (6%)
1921	2	Low incidence of violent conflicts
1922	5	
1923	22	(1) Social democrats (36%); (2) Catholic-conservatives (32%)
1924	10	Low incidence of violent conflicts
1925	8	
1926	0	
1927	274	(1) Marxists (54%); (2) Catholic-conservatives (45%)
1928	8	Low incidence of violent conflicts
1929	77	(1) *Heimwehr* (66%); (2) Social democrats (25%)
1930	40	(1) *Heimwehr* (40%); Social democrats (35%)
1931	27	(1) Social democrats (44%); (2) Catholic conservatives and *Heimwehr* (30%); National Socialists (26%)
1932	104	(1) National Socialists (42%); (2) Social democrats (22%); (3) Austro-fascist grouping[18] (19%)
1933	69	(1) Austro-fascist grouping (38%); (2) National Socialists (32%); (3) Social democrats (16%)
1934 (only Feb. 12 and Jul. 25)	567[19] (deaths only)	(1) Austro-fascist grouping (39%); (2) Social democrats (35%); (3) National Socialists (25%)

Source: G. Botz, 1975, Gewalt und politisch-gesellschaftlicher Konflikt in der Ersten Republik (1918 bis 1933), *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 4: 527.

[17] On the modus of the breakdown see G. Botz, 1975, Gewalt und politisch-gesellschaftlicher Konflikt in der Ersten Republik (1918 bis 1933), *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 4: 526.

[18] 'Austro-fascist' in this context is meant as a general designation of those political groupings that stood behind the Dollfuß government. On the term 'Austro-fascism' see in particular: W. Holzer, 1978, Faschismus in Österreich 1918-1938, *Austriaca* 1: 69-170. F. L. Carsten, 1977, *Faschismus in Österreich,* Munich, 21 et seq.

[19] There exist only rough estimates as to the number of (seriously) injured, see Note 15.

Of the total figure of 859 victims of political violence (217 deaths and 642 serious injuries) for the period between 12 November 1918 and 11 February 1934, 16 per cent were Communists, 33 per cent Social Democrats, 15 per cent members of the *Heimwehr* and the Catholic-conservative 'camp,' 10 per cent National Socialists; the remainder were other civilians (6 per cent) and members of the state's executive (20 per cent).

3. The Forms and Patterns of Political

The annual variations in the levels of violence, set out in Table 1, broadly correspond to the internal political conflict potential in general.[20] The forms political violence took must therefore be seen against this background.

Politically, the conflict constellation of the 'Austrian revolution' was, typically, a three-cornered one: left-wing radicals – Social-Democratic workers – catholic-conservative bourgeoisie. In 1919 the main battle lines of violence ran between left-wing radicals (mostly Communists) on the one hand, and Catholic-conservatives and Social Democrats, the coalition partners in the federal government, on the other. In 1920 the same conflict structure persisted, but was beginning to be superseded by a line-up of the middle class against Social Democrats and other left-wing forces.

The type of violence associated with the largest number of victims during the 'Austrian revolution' took the form of unrests with political or economic objectives, arising more or less spontaneously from demonstrations or offences against property, with significant incidents of violence resulting as a rule only from police intervention (as in the case of hunger demonstrations or price revolts in the winter and spring of 1919 and 1920 in Linz and Graz). A subsidiary branch of this type of violence were putschist actions – still of a spontaneous nature – by left-wing radicals and Communists.[21] The social base for such actions was provided in the main by the urban lower classes, particularly the unemployed, invalids and war veterans. Spontaneous unrests among the rural population, so-called 'peasant revolts,' on the other hand, involved considerably less violence.[22] During the 'Austrian revolution'

[20] On the absence of a social history of the Austrian Republic in the inter-war years see Ch. A. Gulick, 1976, *Österreich von Habsburg zu Hitler*, Vienna; H. Benedikt, ed., 1977, *Geschichte der Republik Österreich,* Vienna; K. R. Stadler, 1971, *Austria,* London; also G. Otruba, 1974, "Bauer" und "Arbeiter" in der Ersten Republik, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft: Festschrift für Karl R. Stadler zum 60. Geburtstag,* Vienna, 57-98; O. Leichter, 1964, *Glanz und Elend der Ersten Republik,* Vienna; B. Skotsberg, 1940, *Der österreichische Parlamentarismus,* Göteborg; K. Ausch, 1968, *Als die Banken fielen,* Vienna; see further literature also in P. Malina and G. Spann, 1978, *Bibliographie zur österreichischen Zeitgeschichte 1918-1978,* Vienna.

[21] Botz, *Gewalt*, 44 et seq.; H. Hautmann, 1971, *Die verlorene Räterepublik*, 2nd ed., Vienna, 145 et seq., 179 et seq.; J. Deutsch, 1921, *Aus Österreichs Revolution,* Vienna, 54 et seq.

[22] Carsten, *Revolutionen*, 252 et seq.; cf. also A. Staudinger, 1969, Die Ereignisse in den Ländern Deutschösterreichs im Herbst 1919, in *Ende und Anfang,* ed. L. Jedlicka, 78, Salzburg; E. R. Starhemberg, 1971, *Memoiren,* Vienna, 37 et seq.; A. Rintelen, 1941, *Erinnerungen an Ös-*

these types of violence were intimately linked to acute shortages of food and consumer goods and deficient social security provisions; thus their incidence, up to 1921, tended to increase during the winter and spring quarters.

Two less bloody forms of violent conflict were limited almost entirely to the first months of the 'Austrian revolution'; once the climax of the revolutionary movement had been passed by mid-1919, such actions also disappeared. One of them consisted in insults to officers and was mainly directed against members of the former imperial military apparatus, aristocrats and, to a lesser degree, industrialists; very rarely, however, did such attacks reach the degree of violence that might be described as serious bodily injury. Such acts, by small groups or individuals, often inflicting more symbolic and psychological than actual harm, were particularly frequent during the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian state apparatus in October and November 1918, an otherwise almost completely non-violent phase. During the power vacuum and the reshaping of the state's structures that followed, somewhat bloodier conflicts began to set in between the members and formations of competing sectors of the state apparatus, either as an accompaniment to the dissolution of the Habsburg empire – where the exchanges of fire by troops belonging to the emergent nation states constituted in effect a transitional form of international violence – or in the course of the formation of the new 'German-Austrian' state, whose apparatus of coercion contained very different political persuasions.[23]

The animosity between the gendarmerie and the federal police, who continued to be conservative-middle class in outlook, on the one hand, and the newly formed 'Marxist' *Volkswehr* (people's defence units) on the other, found its direct expression in occasional shoot-outs between the two, but also existed as a groundswell in mass disturbances when, during conflicts with the police, parts of the *Volkswehr* took the side of the civilian population. But even within the military apparatus itself the dissent between Communist-dominated sections of the armed forces (Rote Garde, Deutschmeister, Battailon Nr. 14) and the Social Democrat majority tended to break out openly, and frequently very bloodily, during insurrectionist actions by left-wing radicals.[24] Acts of violence such as the disruption of meetings or joint assaults on political adversaries still belong chronologically, though not genetically, to the final phase of the 'Austrian revolution.' In the beginning it was the Social Democrat and the Communist workers who were mainly responsible for these.[25] The fact that their middle-class adversaries were able to come out with strong 'anti-Marxist' and anti-republican agitation – particularly during election campaigns – was a sign of the growing strength of counter-revolutionary forces. The Left, on the other hand, had few other means at its disposal beyond a barely organised but deliberate policy of forcible intimidation by a relatively small number and this circumstance signalled the end of its being able to mobilise a revolutionary rank and file. It was only during

terreichs Weg, Munich, 40 et seq.; K. Schuschnigg, 1937, *Dreimal Österreich,* Vienna, 67; more generally also Botz, *Gewalt*, 22-86 (on the following also ibid., 87-280).

[23] L. Jedlicka, 1955, *Ein Heer im Schatten der Parteien,* Graz, 16.

[24] Deutsch, *Österreichs Revolution*, 33 et seq., 47 et seq., 110 et seq.

[25] Cf. for instance J. Deutsch, 1923, *Die Faschistengefahr,* Vienna, 12 et seq.; L. Kunschak, 1952, *Steinchen vom Wege,* Vienna, 78 et seq.; Rintelen, *Erinnerungen*, 106, 110 et seq.

the next stage, the period of collision, that this particular form of political violence became the germinating cell for the prevalent type of violence.

If we summarise the most important trends in violence during the 'Austrian revolution,' we can say that the increasingly revolutionary movement of the rank and file, until it reached its climax in the spring of 1919, had achieved its remarkable (but by no means total) political and social successes by nonviolent or relatively non-violent means. Within a few weeks after the start of the 'Austrian revolution,' the impact of revolutionary ideas had already begun to lessen; at the same time, however, rank-and-file support became both more radical and more narrowly based. Correspondingly, there was a trend towards a decline in mass support and spontaneity, and a greater degree of planning and organisation of violent conflicts, coupled with an increase in the danger of the weapons used. Numerous spontaneous forms of violence, difficult to categorise in party-political terms and usually directed against property, nevertheless remained a phenomenon of this period and disappeared only gradually. In inverse proportion to this, the executive's harshness in the repression of violence directed against the system grew.

The period of relative stability brought no change in the 'anti-Marxist'-'Marxist' pattern of conflict, although until 1926 this remained at a relatively low level of violence. Left-wing radicalism had disappeared almost completely and become merged into the Social Democratic movement, which had meanwhile taken on the role of parliamentary opposition; and within the two 'middle-class' camps-Catholic-conservatives and anti-clerical German-Nationalists – the fascist threat to the parliamentary democratic system had not yet become a force in its own right. Even the climax of the stability crisis in 1923, following the inflationary upheavals of 1922, led only to a quantitative increase but not to a qualitative change in this balance of conflict. The same holds true even for the year 1927, although it was completely overshadowed by the July disturbances that took on dimensions little short of civil war and is usually considered to have been the turning point in Austria's internal political development during the inter-war era.

Soon after the beginning of the period of relative stability, new forms of violence came into being, or more accurately forms that had been developed from types of violence seen earlier. A series of individual acts of violence that now followed represented without doubt a new type of political violence in the Austrian Republic, which no later period in Austrian history was to see again in this accumulated form: acts such as the Nazi *Feme* murder of a young member of a National-Socialist secret society in 1923, the attempt on the life of the Christian-Socialist Federal Chancellor, Ignaz Seipel, by a Social Democrat worker in 1924, the murder of a liberal Jewish author by a Nazi fanatic in 1925, the attempt on the life of the Social Democrat Mayor of Vienna, Karl Seitz, in 1927 by a psychopath under the influence of a right-wing radical 'war veterans' association.' These and a number of other acts of violence, of less far-reaching consequences, were closely connected either with the desperate economic situation or the more or less marked mental anomaly of their perpetrators. A direct link with political organisations and their specific strategies of violence in these cases is only evident where the perpetrators were National-Socialists.

A specific form of violence already referred to as taking the form of disrupting meetings or joint assaults – developed towards the end of the 'Austrian revolution'

and initially practised mainly by the Left – evolved into the typical form of violence of all subsequent pre-civil war periods: the street brawl between unequally organised political adversaries, or the armed clash. This type had arisen out of the following circumstances: the emergence of 'anti-Marxist,' anti-democratic radical minorities, against whom the 'Marxist' workers, in the face of state authorities increasingly sympathetic to the Right, were forced to resort to 'self-help' violence; the minorities, in their turn, developed self-defence cadres, organised on strict military lines and armed with firearms and during meetings and demonstration marches very soon ceased to operate in a purely defensive manner and instead, in anticipation of attacks from the Left, took the offensive and resorted to extreme means of violence and the use of firearms. This constellation resulted in fierce clashes, at first more by accident than design, between the unequal partners in the conflict, with casualties, up to 1927, usually being incurred by the Left.[26]

The causes at work in the case of the workers' unrests of 15 July 1927 in Vienna, however, were different. Their complex further development into a general strike, traffic blockades and, in the western and southern regions of the Federation,[27] sections of the Federal Army and the *Heimwehren* preparing themselves to fight a civil war need not be gone into here. The start of the events of 15 July 1927 in Vienna thus appears as a clash between two uncoordinated violent strategies of threat and repression, the one represented by the Social Democrats' tactics of relatively non-violent, mass street demonstrations, the other by police tactics; the latter, as a result of the shift in political power since 1918/19, were now able to operate with more vigour, albeit no better prepared organisationally than before, against disturbances of law and order from the 'Left.'[28] After a typical process of escalation between initially non-violent demonstrators and the police, Austria stood within a few hours at the brink of a civil war – a development which was prevented mainly by the retreat of the Social-Democratic party leadership, a step that was to lead to its eventual political defeat.

As an exceptional case in the history of Austria since 1848, should be noted the murder caused by the lynching of a young Christian-Democrat gymnast by some members of the Viennese Prater sub-culture, who broke away from an 'anti-fascist' street meeting – an incident that throws some light on the extent of latent political tensions as early as 1925.

Compared with the 'revolutionary period' and the latent civil war that was to come, the interim phase, apart from its opening and closing years, showed a remarkable consistency in the forms of violence employed, a fact which might be taken to indicate that political conflicts had not yet taken on a self-generating dynamism strong

[26] G. Botz, 1973, Bewaffnete Zusammenstöße und Strategie des frühfaschistischen Terrors in Österreich, Teil 1 und IL, Archiv. *Mitteilungsblatt des Vereins der Geschichte für Arbeiterbewegung:* 41-50, 58-68.

[27] Kriegsarchiv Wien, Bundesheer, 1927; Assistenzberichte; L. Jedlicka and R. Neck, eds., 1973, *Österreich 1927 bis 1938,* Vienna, 31 et seq.

[28] Akten der Untersuchungskommission des Wiener Gemeinderates, Allg. Verwaltungsarchiv Wien, Christl.-soz. Partei Wien, box 16; R. Danneberg, 1927, *Die Wahrheit über die 'Polizeiaktion' am 15. Juli,* Vienna; *Ausschreitungen in Wien am 15. und 16. Juli 1927: Weißbuch*, Vienna: Polizeidirektion, 1927.

enough not to be coped with by the stabilising elements within society – always presupposing the absence of external disturbances.

Although the relative calm of 1928, in terms of violence, still appeared to be untouched either by the events surrounding the 15 July 1927, which deeply polarised public opinion, or by the accelerated rise of the *Heimwehr* movement, there now set in an almost unbreakable sequence of violent events that marked the period from 1928 to 1933 as one of latent civil war, which in 1934 finally turned into a state of open civil war. Already by 1929, the first signs of the world economic crisis had led to a significant sharpening of the existing conflict structure, and within the Catholic-conservative 'camp' the *Heimwehr* now began to be a politically dominant and increasingly independent auxiliary force. And in 1930 too, Austrian domestic politics were overshadowed by the, violent conflict between middle-class and 'Austro-Marxism.'

The year 1931, however, saw the beginnings of a remarkable shift in the political battle fronts, as National Socialists joined the side of the Catholic-conservative, *Heimwehr*-fascist grouping in the struggle against 'Marxism.' Shortly before the world economic crisis had reached its climax, the year 1932 showed very clearly how profoundly the constellation of conflict had changed: the strongest enmity now existed between NSDAP and the so-called *System-Parteien* (parties supporting the state) with the Social Democratic Party continuing to carry the main burden of the battle against the German version of Fascism, while itself still caught up in a state of conflict with the *Heimwehr* (and the rest of the Catholic-conservative 'camp'). In 1933 the same main battle lines continued to exist, the only difference being that the weight of the anti-Nazi struggle had now shifted to the conservative, semi-fascist government 'camp,' leaving untapped the powers of resistance of the Social Democrats, whom Chancellor Dollfuß had manoeuvred into a political corner.

In the civil war year of 1934, the same triangular conflict situation persisted. As we can see from Table 1, the government 'camp' came first in the league table of violence. This was the result of its double involvement in a civil-warlike struggle, first from 12-14 February with parts of the 'Marxist camp' and then from 25-9 July with the Austrian National Socialists.

Apart from individual acts of violence which continued to occur sporadically (such as a Communist and a Nazi *Feme* murder in 1931 and 1932 respectively) as well as the assassination of Engelbert Dollfuß in 1934 and the armed attack on the *Heimwehr* leader Richard Steidle by the National Socialists in 1933), the period of latent civil war once more shows typical forms of violence. The armed clashes now indicated a more even match between adversaries than had been the case previously, since the 'Marxist' side had now adapted its organisation, tactics and armament to its adversaries on the Right. Instead of groups of workers operating relatively spontaneously, there now emerged the militarily well-organised *Republikanische Schutzbund* (republican defence league).[29] Clashes became more frequent, indeed were quite often provoked deliberately, they led to severe physical injury and occasionally, just as earlier in 1929 in the Styrian village of St. Lorenzen, turned into pitched street

[29] E. C. Kollman, 1973, *Theodor Körner,* Munich, 191 et seq.; I. Duczynska, 1975, *Der demokratische Bolschewik,* Munich, 109.

battles. Increasingly, the state's forces of order were dragged into the conflict, as for instance during the bloody clash in the Viennese district of Simmering in 1932.[30]

The attempted putsch by the Styrian, the German Nationalist wing of the *Heimwehren* on 13 September 1931, represented a further notable form of violence that played an important role during this period, even though this attempt was confined to a single incident.[31] The military staff exercises and the preparations carried out by the *Heimwehren,* but equally the *Republikanische Schutzbund*'s defensive preparations, from 1928 onwards had gone in the direction of this form of violence. The Austrian *Heimwehr*-fascists frankly admitted that the 'march on Rome' had served them as a model for this.[32]

When it appeared probable that the NSDAP would be made illegal, the year 1933 brought a further form of violence into the political battle field, hitherto unknown in Austrian history: systematic bomb terror. Its objectives ranged from purely demonstrative purposes to deliberately lethal attacks.[33] During the months of impending illegality and also after the NSDAP had been proscribed as a party, this particular form of violence replaced the other most frequent one so far, i.e. clashes between paramilitarily organised private armies.

The logical final stage of latent civil war came with the two outbreaks of battles between the three 'camps,' each lasting several days and involving large numbers of people. In formal terms, both civil wars show a certain resemblance: both cases were a mixture of spontaneity and long-term planning, of a high and a low level of organisation. In both cases, when the fighting began, an already proscribed paramilitary formation stood at the centre of the action. Yet there were also significant differences. The rather broad participation of the SA in the Austrian regions in July 1934 is thus to be regarded merely as the (unplanned) consequence of the SS's operations in Vienna, which followed the classical pattern of a military putsch. The participation of the 'Marxist' workers' movement in the attempted insurrection of the Upper-Austrian *Republikanische Schutzbund* in February 1934, on the other hand, which would have been necessary to provide the required backing, did not occur to the extent the insurgents had hoped for.[34] In typological terms, the 12 February 1934 ought thus to be seen as a defensive insurrection attempt, the 25 July 1934, on the other hand, as a putschist attempt to seize power.

Looking at the period between 1918 and 1934 as a whole, one finds that the groups in opposition to the system were usually also the ones most strongly involved in violent conflicts, for they, in trying to assert their social objectives, pos-

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[30] R. Neck, 1975, Simmering, 16. Oktober 1932 – Vorspiel zum Bürgerkrieg, in *Vom Justizpalast zum Heldenplatz,* ed. L. Jedlicka and R. Neck, 94-102, Vienna.

[31] J. Hofmann, 1965, *Der Pfrimerputsch,* Vienna; B. F. Pauley, 1972, *Hahnenschwanz und Hakenkreuz,* Vienna.

[32] L. Kerekes, 1966, *Abenddämmerung einer Demokratie,* Vienna.

[33] *Das Braunbuch: Hakenkreuz gegen Österreich,* Vienna: Bundeskanzleramt, 1933; Jagschitz, *Putsch*, 31 et seq.

[34] Cf. for instance K. Peball, 1974, *Die Kämpfe in Wien im Februar 1934,* Vienna; H. Fiereder, 1979, Der Republikanische Schutzbund in Linz und die Kampfhandlungen im Februar 1934, in *Historisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Linz 1978,* Linz, 232-241; A. Reisberg, 1974, *Februar 1934,* Vienna; K. Haas, Der "12. Februar 1934" als historiographisches Problem in *Justizpalast,* ed. Jedlicka and Neck, 156-67.

sessed few non-violent alternative means. Thus, from a position of weakness, they tended to take the offensive and resort to violence, only to be regarded as a serious threat by the social groupings controlling the state and to be held down all the more repressively by them.

Table 2 below provides a systematic listing of the most significant forms of violence which occurred in the First Republic, according to the number of participants (or duration of violence) and the conflicting parties' degree of organisation.

Acts of violence committed by individuals or very small groups, especially the merely structured or amorphous forms, were a feature throughout the entire period of the First Republic, even though the frequency of their incidence tended to vary. The 'Austrian revolution' was characterised in particular by forms of violence which, while involving mass participation, were marked by little or no organisation.

The period of relative political equilibrium saw forms of violence with every level of participation; the less they were organised, the greater the number who took part and, conversely, the more highly organised they were, the smaller the circle of participants. The period of latent civil war, typically, showed highly organised forms of violence at all levels of participation.

Table 2: Forms of Political Violence in Austria 1918-34

Number of participants:	Few (-5)	Many (-500)	Very many (500+)
Duration of violence:	short	medium	long
Degree of organisation			
organised	Assassination *Feme*-murder Bomb-terror	Clash	*Coup d'état* Putsch
structured	Assault Clash	Clash	Putschist action Insurrection
amorphous	Insults Political brawls	Lynching	Riot Unrests

The state authorities, as a rule, were the immediate target only of the forms of violence involving many participants; both workers and the urban lower classes, but also the peasants, were particularly active in mass violence of little or no organisation. Participation by the very young or the 'middle class,' on the other hand, is a characteristic feature of all variants of organised individual violence, and this also corresponds to the prevalence of National Socialists in this type of violence.

In sociographical terms, the supporters of predominantly organised or structured forms of violence, ranging from a few to large numbers of participants, may be described in a rather compressed form as follows:

Over-represented among the supporters of political violence (in comparison to society as a whole and also to the non-'militants' within the individual 'camps') are urban and metropolitan youths and young men (under thirty), particularly in the case of the National Socialists, to a lesser degree in that of the Social Democrats. Because of the conflicting parties' paramilitary forms of organisation, women and girls are involved in this type of violence only in exceptional instances.

Particularly disposed towards violence also were the members of groups not (or not yet) firmly incorporated into working life, and therefore with the necessary time and mobility to take part in political violence, i.e. especially the unemployed, war

veterans, invalids (and adolescents). The 'lower' strata of almost all social classes and groups, who appear as 'representative' for these classes or groups as a whole, appear to be particularly predisposed to political violence: students and youngsters in secondary education representing the liberal professions and civil servants, the sons of peasants, tradesmen and merchants deputising for their fathers, unskilled workers and apprentices for skilled workers and craftsmen. Workers in general are more numerous among the 'militants' than among the simple members of the individual 'camps.'

The generation of former soldiers, who had fought in the First World War as very young men, especially officers and non-commissioned officers, provided an important reservoir for the supporters of violence.[35]

4. Explicit Strategies of Violence by Individual Political Groupings

As may be seen from the previous section, violence appears often associated with political radicalism and social fringe groups. Indeed, for violence on any scale between political and social 'camps' to occur at all, it requires a prior process of political marginalisation of at least one of the political 'camps' involved. This conclusion may be drawn from the Communists' putschist actions on the Maundy Thursday of 1919 and on 15 June 1919, but equally from the two outbreaks of civil war in 1934.

According to the three Tilly's,[36] the causes for this must be sought in the following facts: for a powerful group, which, if it deserves this attribute, also stands in close relation to the apparatus of rule, active use of violence is hardly worthwhile. The incidental social costs of (direct) violence very frequently exceed its immediate usefulness, unless those in power are confronted by a serious challenge to their position. The converse holds true for groups which are either far removed from power or without it altogether, since, firstly, the signalling effect attaching to the use of violence, or being turned into the victim of violence, may evoke hidden sympathies or support from sections of the established power groups, and secondly, because those with little power have very few alternative courses of legal action open to them; consequently, the probability of coming to violence by way of illegality is great and – in view of the state's threat of sanctions – causes them to drift even further from the socially accepted rules of the political game. Finally, purposeful and bloody terrorism may well strengthen the power position of groups with little power, by discrediting the power of the government, especially in areas where the latter already suffers from a power vacuum, as was the case in the First Austrian Republic.

This general framework needs to be borne in mind when turning, as we do now, to the explicit strategies of violence developed by political parties and movements in Austria between 1918 and 1934. We may be unable to reach more than provi-

[35] G. Botz, Die „Juli-Demonstranten", ihre Motive und die quantifizierbaren Ursachen des „15. Juli 1927", in *Ereignisse,* ed. Neck and Wandruszka, 17-59; Botz, *Gewalt*, 238 et seq.

[36] Ch. Tilly, L. Tilly, and R. Tilly, 1975, *The Rebellious Century 1830-1930,* Cambridge, MA, 283.

sional conclusions, but this is inevitable, given the absence of any appropriate analyses that go beyond the mere examination of programmatic or theoretical declarations.

First of all we have to consider one strategy of violence which, while highly developed in practice, tended to be too easily overlooked, that is to say, the strategy and tactics in the deployment of the state's forces of order, especially the police. An actual or anticipated infraction of 'law and order,' which by definition should precede any action by the police, would seem to impose a reactive strategy on the state in the exercise of its monopoly of coercion; this, however, was (and still is) not always the case. Yet even reactive strategies in the deployment of the police, and particularly the threshold where violence sets in, show a very broad range of variation, according to specific cultural particularities or the composition of the ruling social groupings and classes. Thus the police strategies vis-a-vis disturbances of order from Left or Right respectively varied considerably.[37]

As long as the state apparatus was still weak and the revolutionary movement unspecific but broadly based – which was the case until around April 1919 – the executive's response to spontaneous disturbances, even in cases of deliberate political infractions of law and order (such as setting fire to the parliament building on 17 April 1919) and during lethal attacks on the police, was a careful and defensive protection of property coupled with peaceful persuasion. The employment of Social Democratic leaders and of soldiers' and workers' councils to mediate, and to legitimise the means of violence deployed made it possible to settle even critical situations with little or no violence. By means of this strategy, Vienna's (German Nationalist) chief of police Schober was able to establish his reputation as a man of 'order,' which later gave him access to the highest political offices. Even after the 'revolutionary' constellation of power had ceased to exist, Schober's police apparatus still tended to exercise restraint in the use of extreme measures.

Once the revolutionary movements had lost some of its breadth, but had gained in Bolshevik direction and radicalism that posed a threat to the system and also brought it into conflict with large sections of Social Democratic opinion, the police practices changed. Both during the Communist's putschist action of 15 June 1919 in Vienna and during hunger and inflation disturbances in the provincial capitals in 1920 they were given fairly indiscriminate orders to clear the streets and to shoot. When the events of 15 July 1927 escalated into the burning of the Palace of Justice and involved considerable loss of life (almost exclusively among civilians) this was due, at least to some extent, to an extremely forceful if uncoordinated and patchy deployment of the police with mounted and armed men.

The consequence of this trial of strength, which ended in a victory for the 'middle-class' government side, was that henceforth the executive's strategy against the Left became increasingly ruthless, while its attitude to threats to the constitution from the Right was one, if not of open cooperation, at least of compliance and tolerance. Thus, different strategies of repression and control were employed which varied according to the political and social origins of the disturbers of law and order.

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[37] P. Waldmann, 1977, *Strategien politischer Gewalt*, Stuttgart, 78 et seq.; unless indicated otherwise, the following arguments are based on my work: *Gewalt in der Politik*.

The Austrian Communists' strategy of violence manifested itself during their spontaneous putschist actions of 17 April and 15 June, 1919 in Vienna. The earlier charge by 'Red Guards' on the parliament building, on the occasion of the proclamation of the Republic on 12 November 1918, already linked part of the left-wing radical movement-which at this stage still included the Bolshevik element that emerged only later as a separate entity – with putschist efforts. This concept of testing their strength by violence had the following background.

Its starting point was (of course) Lenin's successful revolutionary theory, particularly the notion that in a 'revolutionary situation' objective and subjective factors come together: for a revolution to take place, objective social elements (the weakening of the existing system of rule, increased distress among the masses, greater political mobilisation) would have to coincide with subjective ones. These subjective factors, which depended on human will, would find their expression especially in the working class's capacity for revolutionary mass action, under Communist party leadership.[38] Thus the 'correct' degree of consciousness and organisation were decisive elements, if a revolutionary change of power was to become a reality.

A large section of the Austrian Communists took the view in 1918/19, with some justification, that such a 'revolutionary situation' did indeed exist and that it required only minimal assistance in the form of agitation and organisation to set the powder keg alight. A temporary intake of people made 'rootless' by the Great War and its aftermath was claimed to have increased the Austrian Communist Party's membership to around 40,000 by May 1919, the highest figure recorded throughout the period of the First Republic.[39] This appeared to confirm the revolutionary perspective, as did also the proclamation of a republic of councils in both Hungary and Bavaria.

The spontaneous version of the Communists' putsch strategy now consisted in calling simultaneous meetings in different parts of Vienna and, if these meetings proved successful in terms of attendance and atmosphere, to issue orders for an immediate march on the parliament building in the city's centre, there to state their socio-political demands in the form of an ultimatum and to call for the immediate establishment of a republic of councils. Beyond the wave of excitement engendered by several thousand demonstrators, this also required support from units of the *Volkswehr* (people's defence units). Communist agitators therefore appeared in army barracks, seeking to arouse enthusiasm for their cause among Social Democratic soldiers and workers. These efforts were to result in the overthrow of the government, or at least lead to its reconstruction, and the elimination of the Social Democrats' bourgeois coalition partners.

Ernst Bettelheim, who had been sent from Hungary to revolutionise Austria, furnished with dictatorial powers over the Communist Party, after his arrest by the police made the following statement:

> […] that the Communists (at any moment)[40] consider the proclamation of a republic of councils to be desirable, and that the question as to whether any demonstra-

[38] W. I. Lenin, 1968, Der Zusammenbruch der II. Internationale in *Werke*, vol. 21, 206 et seq., Berlin (GDR); W. I. Lenin, 1955, Was tun?, in ibid., vol. 8, 467 et seq., Berlin (GDR).

[39] H. Hautmann, 1968, *Die Anfänge der linksradikalen Bewegung und der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschösterreichs 1916 bis 1919*, PhD Diss., Vienna, 48, 225.

[40] Bettelheim rescinded the bracketed part of the protocol when it came to signing it.

tion may result in such a proclamation can only be answered during the demonstration itself, according to the will of the masses who participate in the same, and according to the prevailing balance of forces.[41]

As early as April 1919, the Communist organisation repeatedly attempted to drive the 'mass of the proletariat' towards revolution. However, the Communist functionaries had either misread the political situation or been guilty of organisational mistakes, for at the critical moment a large part of the working population refused to follow them. An attempted storming of the parliament building and exchanges of fire, although without mass participation, created the impression of a putsch. A Communist workers' council found the 'classical' formulation for this type of strategy: 'What today is called a putsch, will, if successful, be a revolution tomorrow.'[42]

Another form of Communist putschism shows a marked resemblance to the Blanquist concept of insurgence: when the attempted overthrow of April 1919 failed and the Hungarian government of councils came under increasing pressure from abroad, Hungarian emissaries redoubled their efforts to force a political change in Austria. This brought their financially extremely well-endowed cadre organisation into conflict with sections of Communist opinion back home. Undaunted, even though the police, backed by the Social Democrats, carried out preventive arrests, a hard core around Bettelheim nevertheless tried to use the not unfavourable mood among soldiers, threatened by an impending reduction in their numbers, in order to carry out their plan. This attempt, which started on 15 June 1919, found its bloody conclusion under a hail of police bullets. In one of the barracks a central authority had been established to direct military operations of sections of the *Volkswehr* that had been originally envisaged but never came to pass. Military staff exercises on the deployment of the Hungarian Red Army against Vienna may have played a role as well.

As soon as the revolutionary tide ebbed towards the middle of 1919, revolutionary expectations began to collapse rapidly. For a time, Communist splinter groups turned their attentions to the blowing up of a railway bridge (the so-called *Lumpi-cowp*) and to obtaining money by breaking into shops and churches[43] as a curious precursor to the politically motivated bank raids of recent times.

In the years that followed, the Communist Party was never again able to develop its own strategy of violence. Realistically, it could only direct its activities towards mobilising other, stronger proletarian forces and foster armed clashes that might end in an insurrection by Social Democrats, as was indeed attempted on 15 July 1927 and after the clash on 16 October 1932 at Simmering.[44]

The Social Democrats' strategy of violence flowed from their party's reformism which, while attentist in character, was nevertheless based on principles of socialist reconstruction. While the majority of the Party did not reject violence as a political instrument in principle, it nevertheless wished to restrict it to a merely defensive

[41] Allg. Verwaltungsarchiv Wien, Bka, Inneres, 22/gen, Aktenzahl 29653/19.
[42] *Der Abend,* June 6, 1919, 2.
[43] Allg. Verwaltungsarchiv Wien, Bka, Inneres, 22/gen, Aktenzahl 27612/19.
[44] Bericht der Bundespolizeidirektion in Wien vom 20. Oktober 1932, ibid., Aktenzahl 100001/33; Strafsache gegen Johann Koplenig, Vr. 4472/27, Landesgericht für Strafsachen Wien; *Ausschreitungen in Wien*, 33 et seq.

function. Even the ominous formulation in the 'Linz Programme' of 1926, which spoke of breaking the 'bourgeoisie's resistance with the instruments of a dictatorship,' ought to be understood as a mainly defensive statement, intended in effect to force the bourgeois side to keep to the democratic rules, in case it should prove unwilling to give up political power peacefully, once the Social Democrats had won their expected overwhelming election victory.[45]

This strategy was also imposed on the *Republikanische Schutzbund,* founded in 1923 as the supposed armed executive organ of the Socialist 'camp.' Ever since the end of the 'Austrian revolution' the Social Democrats, after all, had had sound reasons for not believing the state apparatus to be absolutely reliable when it came to repulsing counter-revolutionary stratagems, monarchist putsch attempts, the influences of Bavarian and Hungarian right-wing extremists, etc. In these circumstances, the party leadership felt constrained to turn the 'proletariat's fighting fitness' into the reality of a counter-army – and this was precisely what the *Schutzbund* developed into after 1927. Strict military discipline, uniforms, weapon training, military staff exercises, the establishment of arms depots, etc., turned this organisation, which originally had been opposed to militarism, into a militarist one. This also meant that its strategy of violence began to resemble that of its opponents more closely.

Theodor Körner, a former general and the Social Democrats' defence expert, denounced this development in the sharpest terms and at an early stage predicted its consequences: it would have a soporific effect on the Socialist 'camp's' will to fight, compress in an undifferentiated way their various opponents into a single enemy image, produce an almost exclusive reliance on violent means, in the use of which the Social Democrats, despite their numerical superiority, would nevertheless always remain inferior to their opponents. Körner's suggestion to take account in their military concept of the possibility of mobilising the entire working population politically and of spontaneous passive resistance went unheeded, as did his exhortation to try every means available within a parliamentary, democratic constitutional state before resorting to defensive violence.[46]

In effect, the *Schutzbund* increasingly had its fighting methods imposed upon it by others, especially the *Heimwehr*'s strategy of marches, developed towards the end of the 1920s. From 1928 onwards, several thousand *Schutzbund* members tested and demonstrated 'the proletariat's readiness to defend itself, in large-scale manoeuvres and marches virtually every Sunday. It was in the nature of things that this led to collisions with the *Heimwehr*'s opposing strategies and frequently ended in bloodshed. The *Schutzbund,* at least, cannot be accused of directly provoking clashes on any scale, a charge which might with justification be levelled against its opponents.

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[45] K. Berchtold, ed., 1967, *Österreichische Parteiprogramme 1966-1968,* Vienna, 251 et seq.; H. Feichter, 1975, Das Linzer Programm (1926) der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie, *Historisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Linz 1973/74,* 233-9; A. Schunck and H.-J. Steinberg, 1976, Mit Wahlen und Waffen, in *Frieden, Gewalt, Sozialismus,* ed. W. Huber and J. Schwerdtfeger, 464 et seq., Stuttgart.

[46] Kollman, *Körner*, 208 et seq.; Duczynska, *Bolschewik*, 117 et seq.

It was, however, not by accident that the military spirit within the *Schutzbund* prompted a modification of the conditions governing the use of violence – in order to prevent a legal takeover of government after a Social Democratic election victory. The *Schutzbund* leadership around Alexander Eifler and Julius Deutsch took the view that the *Schutzbund* would have to counter right-wing efforts to establish a dictatorship even before the Social Democrats had gained a parliamentary majority. As early as 1928, they reckoned with the ever-present possibility of a civil war breaking out for whatever reason.[47]

If there existed deviations from stated theoretical principles contained in the party programme of 1926 amongst the leadership of its paramilitary organisation, these were bound to be very much more marked and less differentiated among the rank and file.[48] What tended to happen in the day-to-day practice of political conflict – during the 'class struggle with pitchforks' (K. Renner)[49] – was precisely what Otto Bauer, referring to the 'Linz Programme,' had warned against: 'Violence does not mean a street brawl!' The defensive strategy of violence degenerated into partially offensive tactics of brawling. An example of this sort of thing is provided by the following report in a Social Democratic daily paper:

> Our *Republikanischer Schutzbund* of course was not content merely with preventing a scheduled meeting (of War Veterans), but decided to carry out a proper raid. So they broke up the lair of War Veterans in the 'Königswieser' pub [...] and scattered the whole bunch of them. They also took a look at the National Socialists' pub at the '*Grüne Baum*' [...] Their thorough cleaning-up operation extends, of course, to the whole of Upper Austria.[50]

Even if some of this is merely verbal radicalism, the strategy of weakening and intimidating opponents by breaking up meetings and raiding the party venues of right-wing radicals did not stop short of active use of violence. The fact that the party leadership not only knew that their theoretical concepts were being bent, but indeed made occasional deliberate use of a dual political strategy, was proved by the momentous failure of this very strategy on 15 July 1927: using the rank and file to exert pressure on political opponents by stormy demonstrations, 'violence against property' and structured or amorphous forms of personal violence,[51] while as a party leadership pursuing a moderate course, recoiling from the consequences of their own policies. Much as the middle-class and fascist propaganda polemicised against the red peril, men like Seipel and Dollfuß, by contrast, were perfectly able to see

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[47] Kollman, *Körner*, 204 et seq.

[48] In *Protokoll des sozialdemokratischen Parteitages 1926,* abgehalten in Linz vom 30. Oktober bis 3. November 1926, Vienna, 1926, 265.

[49] In *Parteitag 1927: Protokoll des sozialdemokratischen Parteitages, abgehalten vom 29. Oktober bis 1. November 1927 im Ottakringer Arbeiterheim in Wien,* Vienna, 1927, 132 et seq., 139.

[50] *Tagblatt* (Linz), September 13, 1925, Tagblatt-Archiv, Mappe „Sd-Gewalt", Arbeiterkammer Wien, Dokumentationsabteilung.

[51] See: Allg. Verwaltungsarchiv Wien, Soz.-dem. Parteistellen, Karton 6, Mappe 'Sitzungsprotokolle 1921-1928,' Protokoll der Vorstandssitzung (der Vereinigung der sozialdemokratisch organisierten Angestellten und Bediensteten der Stadt Wien) vom 26. Juli 1927, Aufnahmeschrift mit Karl Reder; also *Ausschreitungen in Wien*, as above, 141 et seq.

through this game and to calculate unyieldingly and successfully the risks attaching to their own policies.[52]

For a long time the middle-class Catholic-conservative 'camp' did not develop its own strategies of violence. Ever since the foundation of the Republic, at first timidly and later with growing self-assurance, it had entertained close relations with virtually all levels of the state apparatus, the only exception being the Viennese municipal and regional administrations. The state's executive, or at least sections of it, had always been at its disposal. This may create the impression that this 'camp' had a strictly legalistic orientation throughout. No doubt, quite a few middle-class politicians recoiled from an open break with legality, even at a time when, as in the early 1930s, notions about 'true democracy,' 'the authoritarian state,' undemocratic, dictatorial forms of government had already gained strong currency also among Christian-Socialists (and German-Nationalists). This is not to say, however, that the same group of politicians had not already in 1920, in cooperation with Hungarian counter-revolutionaries, entertained serious plans for the overthrow of a coalition government that gave them only a half-share of power.[53] At various times in later years as well, plans for a coup d'etat played an important role among large sections of the middle-class parties. When Dollfuß set aside parliamentary democracy in March 1933, this constituted in effect a sort of 'cold' *coup d'etat,* carried out by stages.[54]

In the day-to-day political skirmishing of the inter-war period, however, this 'camp' did employ auxiliary troops which operated outside the law and used violent means: the early *Heimwehr* formations, the monarchist *Ostara,* the 'War Veterans' Association' etc., were without exception proto- or semi-fascist organisations. If these were able to operate as independently, as the heterogeneous collection of organisations that had come together in the *Heimwehr* had been able to do since 1927, and to build up their own party organisations, the essential criteria for a fascist movement were in effect already met.

These right-wing radical- and, later on, blatantly fascist-formations had already in the early 1920s practised an offensive version of the Social Democrats' defensive strategy of violence, especially in those regions of Austria where they could command a broad social base.[55] This indicates a constant interplay between the Left's and the Right's strategies of violence, which determined their further development. The *Schutzbund* later copied this strategy, thus provoking in its turn a further mobilisation of its opponents and a general exacerbation of the climate of violence. The fact that right-wing radical and fascist formations had taken the lead, at least initially, in the deadliness of their weapons and the readiness of their use explains why the casualties until 1927, as we have seen earlier, were so unevenly distributed among the warring factions.

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[52] Leser, *Reformismus*, 413 et seq.

[53] L. Kerekes, 1965, Die 'Weiße Allianz,' *Österreichische Osthefte* 7: 360 et seq.; see also H. G. W. Nusser, 1973, *Konservative Wehrverbände in Bayern, Preußen und Österreich 1918-1933,* Munich; L. Rape, 1977, *Die österreichischen Heimwehren und die bayerische Rechte 1920-1923,* Vienna, 1977.

[54] P. Huemer, 1975, *Sektionschef Robert Hecht und die Zerstörung der Demokratie in Österreich,* Vienna.

[55] Carsten, *Faschismus*, 63 et seq., 104 et seq.; Rape, *Heimwehren*, 116 et seq.

As time went on, the *Heimwehr* developed – not least under the influence of Italian fascists and Hungarian reactionaries – a strategy of mass marches designed systematically to encircle 'Red Vienna' and other citadels of Social Democracy, and make them ripe for a takeover, along the lines of the Italian model. Such a provocative display of *Heimwehr* formations in the middle of industrial centres and working class districts (with the blessings of the Catholic clergy and the protection of the state authorities), tightening their formations in ever closer circles around Vienna, meant a symbolic breaking of the 'Reds' monopoly of the street,' and with it a psychological weakening of the 'Austro-Marxists.' The latter did indeed perceive it in this way. Yet when the Social Democrats took up the challenge and deployed their *Schutzbund,* it often required only a minor incident for shooting and violent street-fighting to break out. Virtually every Sunday during the late 1920s saw, by now almost automatic, collisions between marchers and counter-marchers especially in the industrial regions of Upper Styria and Lower Austria.

A planned putsch attempt by the *Heimwehr* may well have taken this automatic triggering of violence into account. Sections of the middle-class parties, for all their sympathy with the *Heimwehr,* were nevertheless hostile to the idea of the latter establishing a dictatorship. For this reason, many *Heimwehr-leaders,* as well as some of their Christian-Socialist backers (such as Anton Rintelen in Styria) hoped that by provoking clashes with the *Schutzbund* they might tempt the latter into larger-scale hostilities or even an attempted *coup d'état.* This in turn was to be answered by a counter-blow from the *Heimwehr,* acting in conjunction with police and army. The expected defeat of the 'reds' was thus to lead to a reconstruction of Austria on fascist lines, unfettered by any constitutional constraints.

This was also the political background to street fights such as the one at St Lorenzen of 18 August 1929. On these occasions the *Schutzbund* acted with restraint, while on the Christian-Socialist side there were reasonable men as well who were able to curb the hotheads within their own and the *Heimwehr* ranks. Without the active participation of the state executive, most of the *Heimwehr* leaders did not in any case feel strong enough to attempt a putsch.[56] When the leader of the radical, pro-Nazi Styrian *Heimatschutz* (home defence), Walter Pfrimer, fearing a possible defeat of the Austrian variant of fascism that was the *Heimwehr* decided, on 13 September 1931, to bring about a 'march on Vienna' after all, his attempt failed miserably in the face of the *Schutzbund* counter-measures and the army's initial neutrality and subsequent hesitant intervention.[57]

The thesis that the *Schutzbund*'s attempted insurrection of February 1934 had been deliberately provoked by the *Heimwehr* remains a matter of heated controversy among scholars of Austrian history, but is certainly not an improbable one.[58] What decided the issue in any case was that the *Schutzbund,* weakened as it was by mass unemployment, the political retreat of the party leadership, and by being banned for almost eleven months, was bound to be defeated, if attacked jointly by

[56] F. Winkler, 1953, *Die Diktatur in Österreich,* Zurich, 27 et seq.; E. Ludwig, 1954, *Österreichs Sendung im Donauraum,* Vienna, 68.

[57] Hofmann, *Pfrimerputsch*, 69 et seq.; Jedlicka, *Heer*, 90.

[58] R. Neck, Thesen zum Februar in *Justizpalast*, ed. Jedlicka and Neck, 154 et seq.; also in ibid., ed. Jedlicka and Neck, 12. Februar, 21 et seq.

the executive and the *Heimwehr,* even if circumstances had been a little more favourable.[59]

If the *Heimwehr* from time to time showed signs of recoiling from the use of the most brutal means of violence, this was not the case with the National Socialists, who proclaimed and practised 'ruthless violence against bestial terror,'[60] both towards 'Marxists' and Jews. And it was National Socialism, too, which produced the greatest variety in the forms and strategies of violence.

It was also the one political alignment which unreservedly proclaimed the use of individual terror for the realisation of its political aims, irrespective of what their party leaders at home and abroad declared. The fascists' very personalised perception of politics did, in effect, lead them to hope for profound political changes from their scarcely concealed calls to assassinate Social Democrat party leaders, Jewish authors or politicians and even Christian-Socialist Chancellors. As early as March 1925, a lone operator was to obey this call and carry out such an attempt, without implicating his party by having any direct accessory or collaborator. Thus from 1924 onwards, a full-blown murder campaign was conducted by the entire *völkisch* press, finding expression in the attempted assassination of Seipel, disguised as a carnival joke, by a Nazi gym-teacher from Vienna, Kaspar Hellering, as well as in murderous attempts on several Social Democrat politicians and the Jewish writer Hugo Bettauer. The latter eventually fell victim to a young Nazi who had obeyed the injunction. Other assassination attempts, like those on the life of Dollfuß and Steidle in the early 1930s, were carried out in a similar manner.

A strategy of more far-reaching consequence was the National Socialists' 'stormtroop terror.' This was embarked upon in an unmistakable manner in 1923, immediately after Hitler had begun to establish his influence also among Austrian National Socialists. The ostensible occasion for implementing this strategy was usually provided by Nazi rallies in working-class districts; their supposed protection against the rising anger of the 'Marxist' workers was to be provided by armed and partly uniformed gangs, who were not registered with the authorities. The resulting (unequal) clashes were thus part of a carefully worked out programme. The middle-class *Neue Freie Presse* reported such incidents as follows:

> The particular characteristic of these incidents in the outer districts (of Vienna) is that the National Socialists seek to penetrate the Social Democrats' headquarters [...] Tactics of such extreme boldness were bound to be regarded as a provocation and it was only to be expected that daring ruses of this kind would elicit an even fiercer response, and that in the face of this kind of offensive a counter-offensive is being taken.[61]

What the instructions were which prepared these 'disciplinary units,' the *Vaterländische Schutzbund* (the patriotic defence league) and later the SA for their tasks, can be gleaned from National Socialist newspaper articles, amounting to a veiled call to murder:

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[59] Peball, *Kämpfe*, 19 et seq., 37 et seq.
[60] *Grobian* (Salzburg), August 1, 1923, 4.
[61] *Neue Freie Presse*, May 5, 1923, 1.

> Instead of waiting until a Jewish hireling, under the protection of darkness, bashes my head in with a cudgel or sticks a knife between my ribs, I prefer to shoot, and shoot as long as my bullets last. A life for a life. If my life is to end, so and so many of my attackers will have to go with me.[62]

The function of this strategy of violence, within the framework of the National Socialists' path to power, may be summarised – just as for other extreme right-wing organisations of the 1920s – as follows:

Demonstrative rallies and the display of large forces of right-wing paramilitary organisations in known 'Marxist' working-class districts, deliberately incurring the risk of armed clashes, were not primarily designed to smash and repress the opposition's organisations. This had been the case in the squadrist terror of Italian Fascism, where fascist militias would be gathered from a whole district to raid a single target – a tactic which turned them into a power factor against Social Democrats and Communists.[63] In Austria, the strength of the 'anti-Marxist' combat formations was inadequate for this kind of action, particularly in the eastern part of the country, nor was the Austrian state apparatus corrupted and weakened to the same degree as the Italian one in 1921/22. The strategy of early fascist and reactionary groups, particularly in Vienna, was thus many-layered.

If a demonstrative meeting in a 'red stronghold' went off without disturbance, it could be used for propaganda (and financial) purposes, since it gave proof of strength both to their own rank and file and to the middle-class in general, who still feared the extra-parliamentary power of the Social Democrats and considered them to be revolutionary.

If, however, demonstrative actions provoked the 'Marxist' workers into disrupting the meetings and into physical attacks which eventually ended in bloodshed, with the greater number of casualties on the Left-attacks, moreover, for which the fascist gangs were well prepared – the expected impact was twofold: on the one hand it would serve to intimidate vacillating groups among the Social Democrats, and on the other it would prove once again to the bourgeois power elites and electorate how dangerous the 'Marxists' were, against whom the fascist cadres had merely acted in 'self-defence' – and thus offer themselves as the most effective instrument against the Left.

In 1933, when the National Socialists had shifted their main line of attack from 'Marxism' to the 'authoritarian system,' composed of Catholic-conservative *Heimwehr*-fascists, the fragmented strategies of Nazi propaganda and violence were integrated into a single violent strategy for the seizure of power. The outbreaks of week-long waves of terror (by bomb attempts, assassinations, the explosion of blank shells, clashes), directed and sustained from Germany, signalled the last phase before an attempt was made to overthrow the government. A staged plan, decided on during a secret conference of Nazi party leaders in Linz on 6 December 1932, envisaged the following steps:

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[62] *Grobian,* August 15, 1923, 3 et seq.

[63] R. de Felice, 1966, *Mussolini il fascista: I. La conquista delpotere,* Turin, 34 et seq; A. Tasca, 1969, *Glauben, gehorchen, kämpfen: Aufstieg des Faschismus,* Vienna, 129 et seq.

1) Small-scale street terror against anything that stands for black-and-yellow in word, print or picture.
2) Disruption of all meetings and conferences of this nature.
3) To increase the emotional turbulence until conditions are ripe for 'everything.'
4) A call to all would-be suicides, that if they wanted to die to choose a hero's death, taking with them a few of those responsible for their distress. Provided this propaganda is skilfully handled, the persons who should be the targets can be nicely pushed into the foreground.
5) To blow up goods trains, for instance of wine or industrial products.[64]

The object of these violent measures was to strike a death blow at an Austria already hard hit by the world slump and to combine this with external economic measures on the part of the German Reich (the 1000-Mark limit): 'The present government must not be allowed a quiet moment.'[65]

In the event, this strategy failed to achieve complete success, as did the attempted putsch of 25 July 1934. It was only the combination of three very different strategies for the seizure of power – the infiltration of government and adminstrative posts from the inside, the generation of pressure from below by relatively non-violent street demonstrations, but most of all the military intervention from outside – which eventually brought the National Socialists to power in March 1938.[66]

5. Social Causes of Political Violence

The emphasis placed, so far, on the element of strategy and tactics might suggest that the acts of political violence which occurred in the First Republic can be adequately explained by the processes of political and strategic decision-making within organisations and groups capable of exercising power. In order to correct this impression, the following analysis of the causes of violence, by way of conclusion, deals with these in macro-historical terms.

In the process of transition from a predominantly agrarian to a predominantly industrial society, the First Republic occupied an interim position.[67] Transitional stages of this kind tend to be characterised by an uneven growth (or decline) of individual sectors of the economy, by concentration in the structure of ownership, and by changes in the distribution of incomes, etc.; they are frequently marked also by great social tensions, political instability and a high level of violence. Highly developed as well as completely traditional countries, on the other hand, tend to-

[64] Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes, Wien, Dok. Nr. 2162; Braunbuch, as above, 23.
[65] *Braunbuch*, as above, 15; Jagschitz, *Putsch*, 34 et seq.
[66] For details see my study: *Vom Anschluß zum Krieg*, Vienna, 1978, 107 et seq.
[67] K. W. Rothschild, 1961, Wurzeln und Triebkräfte der Entwicklung der österreichischen Wirtschaftsstruktur, in *Österreichs Wirtschaftsstruktur gestern – heute – morgen,* vol. 1., ed. W. Weber, 16 et seq., Vienna.

wards political stability and a low level of violence.[68] Social change, particularly if it takes place abruptly or is interrupted – which is the case in most societies at an intermediate level of development – may cause great socio-psychological and political tensions; in this connection the determining role in the shaping of political attitudes has been ascribed to 'relative deprivation.'[69] The high level of violence in the Austria of the inter-war period, compared with the last decades of the Habsburg monarchy and the Second Republic, may thus be linked to the country's accelerated process of modernisation that had already begun at the turn of the century.

If the revolutionary changes, both national and social, which the years 1918/19 had brought in the former empire were partly also a phenomenon of a critical transitional phase in the process of modernisation, the 'Austrian revolution,' in its turn, provided a further element to heighten the conflict. Especially the (not unnatural) absence of consensus as to the structure of state and society resulted in the recently established political and social system being called into question – by the Left, for whom the revolutionary and evolutionary changes since the Great War had not been radical enough, and by the various groups of the Right, because these changes had gone much too far. This explains the attempt, made early on, by the large socio-political groupings to create their own armed formations and to arrogate themselves the right to use violence. The fact that they achieved this to a disastrous degree reflects the weakness of the young state, which in addition was being restricted by the peace treaties. For this reason, the representatives of the state, both middle-class and Social Democratic politicians, were neither able nor willing to prevent the accumulation and distribution of weapons left over by the World War.

A further factor in the fostering of violence, equally a result of the War, was that the veterans of this war as well as the rising generation had grown accustomed to the use of violence.[70] The greater inclination to employ violent means, the 'front spirit,' played an important role throughout the First Republic when it came to giving violent expression to political and social discontent and tensions.

From an historical point of view, next to these long-term or constant causes of violence – their list might be even further extended – the medium-term causes of violence possess an even greater explanatory value. These concern the worsening, over a period of months or a few years, of economic or social conditions. There is no doubt that cyclical downswings, in the short term, produced both an increased degree of social discontent and a greater inclination to use violence. During the democratic phase of the First Republic – which is, strictly speaking, our subject here – periods of economic growth went hand in hand with low annual figures for

[68] I. K. Feierabend and R. L. Feierabend, 1971, Aggressive Behaviour within Politics, 1948-1962, in *When Men Revolt and Why,* ed. J. Chowning Davies, 236 et seq., New York; idem. and B. A. Nesvold, Social Change and Political Violence in *History of Violence,* ed. Davis Graham and Gurr, 653 et seq.; T. R. Gurr, A Comparative Study of Civil Strife in ibid., 572 et seq.

[69] See T. R. Gurr, 1972, *Rebellion: Eine Motivationsanalyse von Aufruhr, Konspiration und innerem Krieg,* Düsseldorf, 33 et seq.

[70] P. H. Merkl, 1975, *Political Violence under the Swastika,* New Jersey, 154 et seq.; K. Renner, 1953, *Österreich von der Ersten zur Zweiten Republik,* Vienna, 117 et seq.

the casualties of violence, unless there were strikes.[71] Conversely, any decline in GNP was accompanied by an increase in political violence (see Figure 1).

In all this, unemployment must be regarded as the key factor in transposing the area of conflict from the industrial-economic sphere to the extra-parliamentary political level (Pearson's correlation coefficient with violence: 0.40). For hundreds of thousands, a long-term and hopeless unemployment situation was the experience which, directly or indirectly, shaped their attitudes, mobilising politically those who had not yet suffered this fate, inclining them more towards the use of violence, while the unemployed tended to be depoliticised by it and alienated from the traditional Social Democratic workers' organisations, which had been opposed to violence.[72] This in turn explains the large percentage of unemployed in the paramilitary organisations of all political persuasions.

The link with unemployment appears significant in another respect as well: its negative effect both on the attitude to strikes and on trade unions may have blocked the settlement of primarily economic conflicts within the orderly confines of labour relations, and may thus have banked up a conflict potential on the economic level which spilled over into the political one. And it is this which, arguably, was the cause of the particular ferocity with which violent political conflicts were fought out in the First Republic.

The fact that in the First Republic, unemployment was of such long duration and made more acute because the slump caused by the world economic crisis further exacerbated an already high degree of long-term, structural unemployment,[73] plays a significant part in accounting for the casualty figures of violence. If one examines the degree to which violence was determined by the time lag between economic growth and a reduction in unemployment, one finds that a one-year time lag alone accounted for 20 per cent of the total violence.[74]

It is therefore only to be expected that political violence cannot be accounted for in purely economic or social terms. A quantitative explanatory model that would also include the organisational strength of the parties in the conflict might lead us in many respects into the area of political explanations. The numerical strength of political organisations engaged in hostilities and violence by itself played an important, albeit quantitatively not yet ascertainable, role. The aspect of the ratio of organisational strength must come into any explanation of the reasons why, in the First Republic, the statistical incidence of violence was subject to considerable annual fluctuations. This leads to the conclusion that a high incidence of political

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[71] On this see my articles: Streik in Österreich 1918 bis 1975 in *Bewegung und Klasse: Studien zur österreichischen Arbeitergeschichte,* ed. G. Botz, et al., 807-31, Vienna, 1978; and Politische Gewalt und industrielle Arbeitskämpfe in Wirtschaftskrisen, in *Wachstumskrisen,* ed. Marin, 260-306.

[72] M. Jahoda, P. F. Lazarsfeld, and H. Zeisel, 1960, *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal*, 2nd ed., Allensbach, 42 et seq., 83 et seq.

[73] D. Stiefel, 1979, *Arbeitslosigkeit: Soziale, politische und wirtschaftliche Auswirkungen – am Beispiel Österreichs 1918-1938,* Berlin; see generally also K. W. Rothschild, 1977, *Arbeitslosigkeit in Österreich 1955-1975,* Linz, 20 et seq.

[74] This value results from a comparison between the multiple defining quantity R^2 for regression equations of economic growth and unemployment, once inclusive once exclusive of the time lag in casualty figures.

violence weakened the material and organisational potential of one of the parties to the conflict – the loser – to such a degree that the avoidance of political violence in the immediately following period became likely.

Perhaps even more important for the exercise of political violence in the First Republic, was the impact of the state's forces of repression. As has been mentioned before, a large percentage of the victims of violence was accounted for by the fact that – whenever the executive was involved in violent conflicts, which tended to happen somewhat automatically if these were on any scale[75] – police and army were more effectively armed and possessed superior organisation and direction.

Probably the most significant cause of political violence was that its very presence in political conflicts dragged the state's apparatus of coercion into the struggle, even if originally the executive had not been involved. This produced – as long as conflict potential existed within society and the necessary organisational preconditions were present – a tendency for the interplay of violence and counter-violence to escalate to dimensions approaching civil war. (For this reason, the statistical analyses given here in summarised form, do not use the crude data of the annual casualty figures, but their decadic logarithm, increased by a factor of 1).[76]

A quantitative explanatory model, certainly still incomplete, for the incidence of political violence in a particular year (O_t) in terms of economic growth (G_{t-1}), unemployment (U_{t-1}), incidence of violence (O_{t-1}) in the previous year and intervention by the executive (E_t) in the following multiple regression equation accounts for 82 per cent of the overall fluctuation of casualty figures:

$$O_t = 0.78 - 0.007\ G_{t-1} + 0.104 U_{t-1} - 0.136 O_{t-1} + 0.86\ E_t$$

While change in economic growth compared to the previous year does not produce a direct effect – albeit an indirect one by way of unemployment – the previous year's unemployment rate constitutes by far the most significant single cause of violence. A positive casual effect on the incidence of violence in a particular year of roughly half this size is dependent upon whether or not the state executive was involved on a major scale in a violent conflict. At the same time, however, a high incidence of violence in the previous year – by weakening the violence potential – inhibits the tendency towards a renewed, equally strong outbreak of violence.

[75] Cf. also Ch. Tilly, 1975, Revolution and Collective Violence, in *Handbook of Political Science,* vol. 3, ed. F. I. Greenstein and N. W. Polsby, 515, Reading, MA.

[76] The quantitative values used here are given in the Table 3. Sources for them in Botz, *Politische Gewalt*, 261 et seq., notes 7-9.

Table 3: Casualties of Violence, Economic Growth and Unemployment in Austria, 1919-34 (Values of the Variables of the Regression Equation)

Year	Casualties of violence (deaths and serious injuries)	Log. of casualty figures increased by a factor of 1	Growth of GNP in real terms, in % compared to previous year (=100)	Unemployment rate (as % of labour force)	Strong involvement by executive (more than 1 death on the govt. side = 1, otherwise = 0)
1919	124	2.097	0.1	9.2	1
1920	76	1.866	6.9	2.0	1
1921	2	0.477	10.7	1.4	0
1922	5	0.778	9.0	3.4	0
1923	22	1.362	-1.1	6.6	0
1924	10	1.041	11.7	5.8	0
1925	8	0.954	6.8	7.9	0
1926	0	0.0	1.6	9.4	0
1927	274	2.439	3.1	9.2	1
1928	8	0.954	4.6	8.5	0
1929	77	1.892	1.5	8.9	0
1930	40	1.613	-2.8	11.2	0
1931	27	1.447	-8.0	14.2	0
1932	104	2.021	-10.3	18.3	0
1933	69	1.845	-3.3	20.3	0
1934	1932	3.286	0.8	18.8	1